

# Listening to people affected by stroke.

September 2024



# There are 22,595 stroke survivors registered with a GP in the Black Country.

Stroke survivors and their loved ones need tailored support to navigate healthcare.

Over the last few months we have been working with Dudley Stroke Association (DSA) to listen to feedback from people who have been affected by a stroke and their families and carers.

Healthwatch Dudley listens to people's views of health and social care. We aim to hear from all communities including those who may find it more difficult to have their voices heard. We share this feedback with people who have the power to improve services.

## Dudley Stroke Association

Dudley Stroke Association are a local charity who provide advice, guidance and support to people, carers and their families who have experienced a stroke. They offer a range of groups and activities including exercise sessions, outings and social groups.



It has been lovely to welcome Linzi to our well-being walks. Giving our members an opportunity to have their voices heard, and share their experiences, is imperative in making improvements. We look forward to welcoming Healthwatch to our other groups in the future.

–Dudley Stroke Association



Life goes on after a stroke, we can help.



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## What we did

Our Listening & Signposting Officer joined staff from Dudley Stroke Association and Dudley Council's Public Health Team for their monthly well-being walk for people who have had a stroke and their families and carers.

The route includes walking through the park and along the local canal network. The walk usually lasts around one hour and there is time for a chat and a cup of tea at the end.

The walk starts from Netherton Park Healthy Hub is led by a trained walk leader, who decides the pace and the route depending on the ability of the people who are attending.

Healthwatch Dudley joined the walk on 10th May, 19th July & 16th August 2024.

## The walks in numbers

**12** people shared their experiences of health and social care with us.

**3** well-being walks for people who have been affected by stroke.

**15,000** steps walked by our Listening & Signposting Officer

**4** people given information on carer support

**15** people signposted to other services that can help



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## Having to leave a GP practice after 30 years

**After moving to a new home due to health issues, someone we spoke to found out that they could no longer attend the GP surgery they had been to for 30 years.**

They asked where they could register and were told to find somewhere that had space, sharing that they were not offered any assistance to find a new GP surgery.

Q “I was upset when I was told after 30 years I needed to leave my GP practice because I had moved house.

The receptionist was really abrupt. I asked where I could move to and was told I would have to look for one that had room for me”

The patient has now moved to a new GP surgery near to their new home and report being happy with the service they receive.

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## Difficulty contacting GP practices

**People who have had a stroke may have difficulty communicating, especially over the phone. This has made it difficult for some people to call their GP to make an appointment.**

People told us about difficulties they face when contacting services by telephone and having to follow the verbal instructions on pre-recorded messages. Too many instructions can be overwhelming and confusing for some people.

Someone told us they avoid calling their GP surgery and choose to book their appointments in person.

### Feeling supported

One person shared they had been given an allocated Care Co-ordinator who supports them to make appointments which is making things much easier for them to manage.

They mentioned that being able to book face to face appointments with their GP was helpful.





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## Pharmacy services

**Stroke can affect a person's memory, which can be difficult when you have to remember to take multiple medications.**

This was highlighted by someone who takes a large number of tablets each day. Their pharmacy provides this in a blister pack weekly which helps them to manage their medication safely.

When services are aware of the impact of stroke and make reasonable adjustments to a person's care, this allows someone who has had a stroke to take control of their own health.



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## Dental services

**We heard about positive experiences accessing NHS dental services from two people who attend their dental surgery for regular check ups.**

**"We get a really good service from our dentist!"**

Two people shared that they pay privately for their dental treatment but commented on the expense. They moved to a different dental surgery following an incident where one of them was left with an injury following a tooth extraction. This has left them nervous about attending appointments but they report their new dental surgery is really supportive and patient with them.

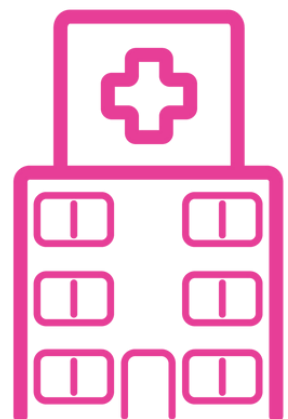
**"We pay privately for our dental care, but I think it is really expensive."**

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## Getting help in an emergency

**DSA staff shared a recent experience where they had tried to get assistance for a service user who felt unwell during a session.**

Staff acted quickly and checked the person's blood pressure and heart rate. They reached out to the person's GP to get them seen straight away but they were told no one was available at that time. The surgery did see the person the next morning and the person was admitted to hospital that day for further checks.



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# Turning feedback into action

## GP Surgeries

- We are working with NHS partners to create a charter that will make it easier for people to get the care they need from their GP surgery.
- We are championing the communication needs of people who have been affected by stroke.

## Pharmacies

- We are supporting the local Pharmacy Needs Assessment which will look at the pharmacy needs of the community.

## Dental services

- We are conducting research into how people access Dental care in Dudley borough. We will be seeking the experiences of people who have been affected by stroke so their feedback can build a bigger picture.

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# Recommendations

## GP Surgeries

- Some patients may need more help when accessing services or if they need to move surgeries
- Could GP surgeries assist more vulnerable patients and those with long term health conditions to move to a different practice if they need to.

## Pharmacies

- Blister packs can help people who take a lot of medication or have problems with memory. Pharmacies could share information on this services with people who may need it.

## Dental services

- Respect people's communication needs.
- Allow patients to take more time communicating if needed.





# Thank you

Thank you to Dudley Stroke Association for being welcoming and allowing us to join them on their walks.

Thank you to the people who have shared their thoughts and experiences. Sharing these stories helps to inform improvements in health and social care across Dudley borough.

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## Have you been inspired by these stories?

Are you interested in supporting Dudley Stroke Association or finding out more about activities at your local Healthy Hub?

### More information about Dudley Stroke Association

[www.dudleystrokeassociation.org.uk](http://www.dudleystrokeassociation.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/dudleystrokeassociation](https://www.facebook.com/dudleystrokeassociation)

### More information about Dudley Healthy Hubs

[www.healthydudley.co.uk/explore/healthy-hubs/](http://www.healthydudley.co.uk/explore/healthy-hubs/)

**If you would like this report in another language or format please contact us.**

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**Committed  
to quality**

Healthwatch Dudley is committed to providing a quality service, from how we collect data, to the information we provide. Every three years we perform an in-depth audit, in conjunction with Healthwatch England, to ensure we meet this high standard.